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More Than Just Photographs



A Dance In Colombia (2024)

Photographs will always be an instinct for those of us that have a fear of losing a memory if it's not captured on film. So naturally, when I went on my first trip outside of the United States to Colombia during the second week of January with my two bestest friends, Nicole and Ivana, my camera was always around. This

was our first group trip that we had been planning for years. We've all been friends for 6 years. Nicole and Ivana are both from Pereira, a city in Colombia, so going there for our first trip was the perfect idea. They knew it was my first trip away from home so they set up a very specific itinerary, with lists of places they loved and wanted me to see and experience. On that itinerary was Zoológico Ukumari, a zoo in Pereira. It was a very hot day when we went to the zoo so by the end of the walk around the zoo, we were all ready to head back to Ivana's grandparents home, which is where we were staying. On our way to the exit, we noticed a crowd gathered around in a circle with music playing. We were unable to tell what was going on in the center of the circle so we got closer and saw two dance performers, a woman and a man in yellow Colombian dance costumes. Fascinated with the choreography happening in front of me, I quickly grabbed my camera out of my purse and pointed it to the dancers. I didn't immediately take the photograph, as the dancers kept moving around. I was following the rule of thirds, which normally I wouldn't do but it felt necessary during this time because the yellow clothing they were wearing was the perfect color to create a focus towards the dancers, which is exactly what I wanted. So I waited for the performers to be in the center and snapped my photo. In Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (2013) She explains "Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Un- sure of other responses, they take a picture.

This gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, and move on.” (Pg. 534). During this trip I found myself with my camera around at all times, as if I didn’t capture a remarkable moment, then it never happened. Having the photograph with me felt like proof the trip actually happened.



Ivana’s 20th Birthday (2024)

My dearest friend, Ivana. A friendship I have valued since high school. And while we are considered best friends, I think sisters is the better definition of our bond. This photo was taken on September 14, 2024. The very awaited birthday

celebration that was planned months prior. Noticeably, the theme was red, Ivana's favorite color. It's also the most dominant color in this photograph. This was a memorable day, not only because it was Ivana's birthday but because it was the last month her mother, in the black dress, would be in the United States. Ivana's family was present, as well as her closest friends. The night was filled with laughter, charades, dancing, and many other unforgettable memories. My only goal this night was to capture Ivana and her mother's beautiful bond on camera as a way for Ivana to have a memory with her at all times. This photograph was taken seconds after the cutting of the cake. Ivana had the biggest smile on her face. While it may seem like nothing more than just a birthday celebration photo to many, it is a photo that I look at and feel deep emotions, A combination of happiness and sadness, as I remember it was right before her mother left. In Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (2013) She worded the feeling of holding onto photographs perfectly. "After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed." (Pg. 535). I have always been big on family events and capturing every moment on camera to make sure it is always there on photograph. It's my access to a Time Machine, a way of having my memories remain eternal.



The Blue Light (2024)

There we were. My twin sister and I on Wednesday, September 4th on the second night of the Pearl Jam concert at Madison Square Garden. The concert we had been anticipating for months, suddenly was here. I remember being in class earlier that day with only one thing in mind, this concert. We arrived at the concert right on time. The show began and the band was full of energy as if it was the 90s again, which was when they became a band. Then came a moment where the band took a moment to thank the crowd for their love and support. It was at that moment that I felt a bright blue light glaring at the left side of my face. I turned to see where

it was coming from when I saw multiple glaring blue lights coming from the opposite side of the stage. As soon as I saw this blue light I automatically had to capture the moment. It looked like the perfect art photo to me and the perfect way of remembering an unforgettable night. Looking back at this photograph, it reminds me of what John Berger wrote in his book *Understanding A Photograph* (2013) “A photograph, while recording what has been seen, always and by its nature refers to what is not seen. It isolates, preserves and presents a moment taken from a continuum.” (Pg. 20). This picture only captured a small portion of the concert, but captured enough for me to immediately know when I look back at it, that it was from the Pearl Jam concert my sister and I went to. I know what was going on even though it’s not actually in the photograph, while someone who is seeing it for the first time might be confused as to what is going on.

Ultimately, Adding context to images helps bring a photograph to life. Making the viewer understand the photograph on a deeper level like the photographer understands it. These moments I captured felt perfect to me, not only because of what was going on, but also because of the colors in the photographs that I feel add composition and emotion to what is seen. In Teju Cole’s “Perfect and Unrehearsed” (2015) he helps expand more on perspective and moments photographers view their photographs as “the moment.” Also known as a decisive

moment, A term I believe creates a beautiful backstory to an already beautiful image.

(1117 words)

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